

February 4, 2015

The Honorable Senator Julia Lynn, Chair
Senate Committee on Commerce
State Capitol, Room 548 South
Topeka, KS 966612

Proponent Senate Bill 3

Re: Unemployment Benefits for Privately Contracted School Bus Drivers

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Bobby Thomas. I work for First Student Transportation, a subsidiary of First Group in Wichita, Kansas. I'm standing before you today asking this committee to support Senate Bill 3, authored by Senator Faust-Goudeau that would end the disqualification of unemployment benefits for School Bus Drivers in the State of Kansas.

I support this bill for the following reasons:

I stand before you asking you to repeal a serious injustice that had taken place since 1983 that was called Reasonable Assurance of work. The statute disqualified School Bus Drivers who worked for a private contractors from collecting unemployment benefits during the summer months when schools are on summer recess.

Wichita, KS schools summer recess is only 9 weeks for School Bus Drivers. During the summer months I have witnessed co-workers having much difficulty paying rent, utilities, food & etc. One would think School Bus Drivers are seniors not so!

Bus driver's age can range from 21 to past 71 years old. As an average, school bus drivers starting wage is \$12.00 to \$12.25 per hour at other locations making \$13,000 to \$19,000 yearly before taxes.

It is unimaginable that folks have to survive on that for an income.

I ask why School Bus Drivers are punished in that way especially since we transport your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews.

In a world so violent and hazards lurking in the roadway. We protect our passengers with our lives. School Bus Drivers are required to have CDL's (Commercial Drivers Licenses) and undergo a battery of testing to prepare us to be the best we can be.

Page Two
The Honorable Senator Julia Lynn, Chair
February 4, 2015

The expense involved in training new School Bus Drivers exceeds the amount that will be paid to every School Bus Driver being paid unemployment benefits. Employers would welcome paying such benefits.

Senate Bill 3 would also enable employers to keep seasoned, experienced School Bus Drivers. The turnover rate is very high at First Student Transportation and I was 683 on the seniority list when I started 8 years ago and today I am 110.

I hope this Committee will pass Senate Bill 3.

In closing Members of the Committee I'm asking for your support for Senate Bill 3.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Sincerely,

Bobby Thomas
1643 N. Minnesota St.
Wichita, Kansas 672174